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## THE SPANISH PEAKS.

By J. J. JEWETT, Topeka, Kan.

WHERE glacier gleamed, a jeweled precipice,  
With torrents pouring from its blue abyss,  
Before Niag'ra had begun to trench  
Its channel through Ontario's rocky bench,  
I stand, and view a river's whirling flood  
Fall seaward with its tinge of tribute mud.

I marvel if, again, the ice will gleam  
A thousand feet above the turbid stream.  
A city rests upon the glacial grist,\*  
With towers and spires the blessed clouds have kissed:  
Its smoke, and steam, and screeching sounds of power  
Proclaim its Kings of Toil rule every hour.

I wait the dark, one-eyed, steam-spirit steed,  
That dares essay the black tornado's speed:  
I mount a carriage gorgeous with plush:  
A bell is rung: a thousand people rush  
This way and that: the city vista yields  
To farms well tilled and ample pasture fields.

The westward train th' ascending prairie streaks,  
And far southwest reveals the Spanish Peaks,  
That tower above the earth-curve of the plain  
As shipmasts loom above the convex main,  
While yet the bulky body of the ship  
Lies hid below the dim horizon dip.

In sooth they seem a ship in steady sail  
Across a swardy sea of swell and swale,  
Above the panorama, boundless stretched,  
Of moveless troughs and billows Time has etched  
With wind and water, frost and acid gas,  
And clothed in herbage decked with plumes of grass.

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\*The situation is applicable to Topeka, Kan., or to Kansas City, Mo.

The Spanish Peaks are situated on the south border line of Huerfano county, in southeastern Colorado. The west peak, on the authority of Hayden, is 13,620 feet high; but Wheeler found it to be 100 feet higher. The latter altitude is that which is generally accepted. The summit of the west peak is about 7000 feet above the low hills adjacent, and about 8000 feet above the surface of the plain fifteen to twenty miles distant. The east peak has 1000 feet less altitude. The summits of the peaks are about three miles apart. Owing to the absence of surrounding mountains the peaks are more conspicuous than Pike's Peak, although the latter is more than 400 feet higher than the west peak. The Santa Fe and the Missouri Pacific roads afford westward tourists views at a distance of ninety miles and under. R. C. Hills (Proc. Colo. Sci. Soc., 1890) says the peaks are "natural lightning-rods," and fulgurites abound upon them. He classes the peaks as laccolithic eruptions, and states that the west peak carries a large mass of metamorphosed sedimentary rock. Hayden and Endlich regarded the peaks as an enormous dike. Prof. I. C. Russell (Volcanoes of North America) says they are the "roots" of vast, extinct volcanoes. All are agreed that they are the product of Tertiary times. The coal-beds of the region are of the Laramie formation.—J. J. J.

Above their base two thousand meters high —  
 Gray silhouettes — they jut against the sky,  
 Yet eighty miles away, as flies the crow.  
 Are they not clouds on the horizon low —  
 Not rocky masses from the Earth's hot breast,  
 By forces measureless and ceaseless pressed ?

I watch and wait, till o'er the rails of steel  
 Leagues have been traversed by the iron wheel,  
 And still the twins remain unchanged and grand,  
 Like Egypt's pyramids amid her sand.  
 I know they are not clouds — that cannot be !  
 Else, sun-warmed, they would change their forms or flee.

A league of mountain ridge the twain unites  
 (Like Chang and Eng), below their shoulder heights,  
 Extending east and west ; but Earth is curved,  
 And far away this wall is unobserved :  
 All round these yoked yet isolated mounts  
 Is broad plateau, the traveler recounts.

How come those trachyte cones to stand aloof  
 From mountain range, to Time's sharp trencher proof ?  
 Methinks I hear the voice of Science, now,  
 Say: "List, attentive! I will tell you how;  
 For I have been with Nature, and have sought,  
 In her own diary how she has wrought.

"There she has written births and epitaphs:  
 Has printed pristine, cryptic lithographs;  
 Engraved with fire, and frost, and sanded blast;  
 And pages bossed with shell and metal-cast.  
 Though she, at times, has torn her books apart,  
 And crumpled up their leaves afresh to start.

"These have I studied and interpreted.  
 Nature still works and writes as I have read,  
 And constantly, but so exceeding slow,  
 That in a chapter ages come and go.  
 Her latest tome, her very newest page,  
 Repeats the story of a former age.

"Her records show no date, no year of prime,  
 To separate Eternity from Time;  
 And yet, her labors, in succession done,  
 Go back, in terms of time, to when begun.  
 Perchance the index of her present acts  
 Will point the centuries of ancient facts.

"But this is what her records do aver,  
 About the Peaks, of things that are and were:  
 Beneath the surface of the bord'ring wold  
 Are fallen forests, piled a thousand fold,  
 And crushed by massive sheets of rock o'erlaid,  
 And charred to blackness by the pressure made.

- “Below the wide expanse of forests charred  
Are beds of rock, in layers soft or hard,  
Formed on the basement of a sea now gone,  
Of substance shorn from land no sea was on:  
For, always, has the sea its basement strown,  
With shearing of the land, and made it stone.
- “Miles thick the sea built up, lay over lay,  
With sand, and lime, and iron-rust, and clay:  
And forms of life from flooded plains and glens,  
And countless millions of her denizens  
She felted in the tissue of her spreads  
To mark the ages of successive beds.
- “So, then, the rocks beneath the plain were built  
From older rocks dissolved to grit and silt.  
As life from older life is ever sprung,  
As ancient forms must pass away for young,  
Even the Earth itself will pass from view,  
And, as it has been, Earth be formed anew.
- “The ancient sea-floor most unsteady was—  
It rose and fell, yet not without a cause:  
If one shall press upon a plastic ball,  
Elsewhere 't will bulge, if it shall yield at all:  
So, when some heaviest portion of Earth's crust  
Shall sink a little, rise the lightest must.
- “And so, at times, the sea-floor rose to air,  
For, when the bottom of some sea elsewhere,  
More burdened with the waste of continent,  
Sank somewhat lower, this one was upsent.  
Again, when overfreighted with debris,  
Down, also, went the bottom of this sea.
- “And some old land that Time had weather'd light  
Was slowly lifted to a greater height.  
It ever was, and will be time to come,  
Things sought, and will seek, equilibrium.  
And thus, alternate, up and down they swing—  
The land and sea—like scale-pans balancing.
- “It came to pass the sea itself was drained,  
And in its place a wide champaign remained.  
It came to pass the plain became a lake,  
With many a ferny, many a reedy brake:  
Titanic monsters wander'd round its brink,  
And five-toed horses daily came to drink.
- “The ages came and lapsed: It came to pass  
The lake was banished for a vast morass,  
Where matted vegetation turned to peat:  
Trees, sedges, mosses, piled a thousand feet,  
Were massed, till future tides above should roll,  
And weight of rock should press them into coal.

- “It came to pass the sea again o’erflowed;  
The marsh went downward with its carbon load.  
Some mountain, gable-roofed, had raised its crest,  
And lesser weight beneath its cover pressed:  
Plutonic magma rose to fill the space,  
And let the sea resume its ancient place.
- “The Earth forever shrinks upon its core:  
’T is shrinking now, as it has shrunk before:  
Its skin (to Earth a hairbreadth to an inch),  
In folds and wrinkles shows the mighty pinch:  
Its strength is weaken’d where ’t is often bent,  
Between the highland and the sea’s descent;
- “And as it shrinks to less and lesser girth,  
Up bursts some inner matter of the Earth.  
Now, where the Spanish Peaks are was a coast,  
Along which line the crust was weakened most.  
When unfledged ages passed to ages flown,  
And Earth had very little cooler grown,
- “Its crust, more shrunken than it e’er had been,  
Exerted greater stress on things within,  
And forced up, as it were a drop of paste,  
From out the vastness of the mass encased:  
That viscous drop the Spanish Peaks became—  
To man a lofty, awe-inspiring frame.
- “The hot mass on its shoulders bore a cloak,  
From sea-constructed rock through which it broke,  
And, like a huge cephalopod, it thrust  
Its tentacles through fissures in the crust,  
Which its own violence had opened wide,  
In radiating lines on every side.
- “It pushed its feet between the sheets of rock  
The sea had laid, as if its work to mock;  
It formed its skirt of rent and angled parts,  
And challenged clouds to hurl their lightning darts.  
The clouds were willed to wage a furious war;  
To them were wind and frost allied that for:
- “Ten hundred thousand years the battle raged,  
And still the allied forces are engaged.  
Earth sent up reinforcements to its own;  
Dike after dike gave to it bulk and bone,  
Until ’t was braced with ribs throughout its form,  
And raised its taunting heads above the storm.
- “And still the elements beat, day by day;  
A thousand meters’ height has worn away;  
Its cloak is but the remnant of a wrap,  
Its skirt has wasted to a ragged scrap.  
Ten billion tons of snow and ice it’s held;  
Ten billion tons of water has repelled.
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- “Ten million thunderbolts with jagged points  
Have penetrated through and through its joints.  
It yet defies its old, immortal foes,  
And tranquilly receives their puny blows.  
Yet will the potent princes of the air  
This two-crowned monarch into atoms tear :
- “The frost will flake, the ice will grind and grate,  
The lightning decompose and dissipate ;  
The winds will etch it, solvent rains descend :  
Though rock, on rock foundation, it will end.  
It will be moved—yet not through human faith,  
But consciousnessless, persistent, certain, scathe —
- “And in the sea be cast, in time to be —  
That Time will be—Time is Eternity.  
Then will this prairie have been scraped and scored —  
Perhaps below the ocean’s level lowered :  
No continent forever will endure ;  
No star or moving planet is secure.
- “The Universe, in every part, will change ;  
Yet, not a whit from Nature will estrange ;  
Nor can there be what can annihilate  
The potencies and portions that create  
The forms that are (though forms that are shall flit),  
For force and matter are the Infinite.”